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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 16 April 2014 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to you in follow-up to our numerous previous letters regarding the illegal policies and constant provocations and incitement by Israel, the occupying Power, and its extremist settlers and religious zealots against the Palestinian people, their land and their holy places. Over the past couple of weeks, such reckless actions and provocations have not only continued but have escalated, further exacerbating tensions and religious sensitivities between the two sides and risking a dangerous destabilization of the already fragile situation on the ground.

In this connection, I must inform you of the extremely worrying developments that occurred today, 16 April, at Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary), which houses the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and Qubbat Al-Sakhra (the Dome of the Rock) in Occupied East Jerusalem. In a clear act to aggravate and destabilize the situation on the ground, at 7.45 am (Palestine time), Israeli occupying forces unlocked the entrance of Al-Mughrabi Gate, which is the entrance to Haram al-Sharif, to allow for the entry of over 1,000 occupying forces, backed by so-called "border police" as well as "special units", including a sniper squad, to violently raid the mosque, provoking confrontations with the Muslim worshippers inside Al-Aqsa Mosque.

According to reports, Israeli occupying forces cordoned off the southern building of Al-Aqsa Mosque and fired a barrage of tear gas canisters, rubber-coated bullets and stun grenades towards the worshippers, who took refuge in the mosque. These violent attacks by the occupying forces caused fear and panic to spread among worshippers and provoked clashes. As a result, at least 25 Palestinians were injured, including some hospitalized for respiratory injuries due to the firing of tear gas canisters. In addition, dozens of Palestinians are said to have been detained by the occupying forces. Moreover, shortly after this provocation, the occupying Power deployed its occupying forces at all gates of the holy compound, where Palestinian men under the age of 50 were denied entry into the mosque at the time of prayers, further violating their human rights, particularly the right to worship.

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As noted in prior letters, Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first qiblah and the third holiest site in Islam, continues to be subjected to threats, incitement and provocations by Israeli occupying forces as well as extremist Israeli settlers and right-wing zealots, who have been calling for a "group pilgrimage" to Haram al-Sharif to mark the Jewish Passover holiday, now under way until 21 April. Moreover, the constant provocations by right-wing Israeli officials, to which we have also referred in past letters, has deepened concerns and fears among the Palestinian people and their leadership about the potential for further crisis in this most sensitive area.

We reiterate once more that all such illegal Israeli actions at Haram al-Sharif, and for that matter throughout the rest of Occupied East Jerusalem, are in violation of the numerous relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for a cessation of all Israeli policies and measures aimed at altering the character, legal status and demography of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including of East Jerusalem, and for respect by Israel, the occupying Power, for its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits such actions.

We believe that all such incitement and provocations against Muslim and Christian holy sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and against the Palestinian people, whether they be perpetrated by the Government of Israel, its occupying forces or its illegal settlers or religious zealots, warrant serious and immediate attention by the international community, including by the Security Council, in line with its primary duty under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. We therefore reiterate our call upon the international community to act with urgency and responsibility to ensure the de-escalation of this perilous situation in Occupied East Jerusalem and to bring a halt to the occupying Power's violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. These latest violent and dangerous measures taken at Haram al-Sharif are not only aimed at illegally and forcibly entrenching Israeli control over Haram al-Sharif and Occupied East Jerusalem but are also seriously jeopardizing the prospects for ever realizing a peaceful and just settlement on the basis of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 492 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 9 April 2014 (A/ES-10/623-S/2014/257), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations